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6. THE GREYHEADED LAPWING, *VANELLUS CINEREUS* (BLYTH) IN KALIVELI TANK, TAMIL NADU

On January 25, 1997, I was surveying water birds in Kaliveli Tank, a brackish wetland on the east coast in Tamil Nadu (12° 05'-12° 15' N, 79° 47'-79° 59' E). In the midst of two curlews, *Numenius arquata*, and five large egrets, *Ardea alba*, there was a grey headed wading bird which struck me as unusual. I approached closer, wading into the slush and watched with my binoculars at a distance of about 20 m. It was a greyheaded lapwing, *Vanellus cinereus* (Blyth). I watched the bird feeding for two minutes and edged closer, whereupon it took off and settled about 100 m away. I watched it for some time and then tried to see if there were other individuals of the species. It was a lone bird, and after half an hour, flew away silently. The bird was distinguished from other lapwings by the completely smoke-grey head and neck; yellow beak and wattle. The primaries were black and the tail feathers had a broad black subterminal band. In flight, the bird spread out its tail feathers. It was a juvenile, as the dark pectoral band of the adults was missing (Ali and Ripley 1980).

This species is known to be a regular winter visitor, from September-October to March-April, to India in Assam, Manipur, North Bihar, Dehra Dun, Rajasthan and the Andaman Islands, as well as several places in 'East India' (Ali and Ripley 1980). Subramanya (1987) has recorded this species from Bangalore. This sighting is the second record for the species in peninsular India. The bird was probably a vagrant, since I had not seen it during my survey of the region in 1995-96, nor did I record it in 1998. Perennou (1987) and Perennou and Santharam (1990) have conducted detailed ornithological surveys in this region and have not come across this species.

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